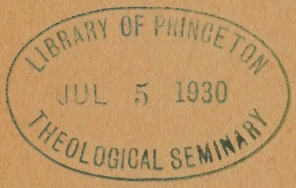

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WORSHIP AND COMMUNION

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BY

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SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE

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WORSHIP AND COMMUNION

CHAPTER I

THE PRESENT SITUATION

TWENTY years ago Mr. Masterman gave it as his considered opinion that "present belief in religion as a conception of life dependent upon supernatural sanctions, or as a revelation of a purpose and meaning beyond the actual business of the day, is slowly but steadily fading from the modern city race."* If we have regard to institutional religion alone, the intervening years have certainly witnessed a marked acceleration in the fading process.

Side by side with this neglect of institutional religion is a deep dissatisfaction with life and a hunger after God, however it may be defined. This hunger bears unmistakable witness on the one hand to the incurably religious nature of man, and on the other to the failure of organised religion to meet his need. Man is by nature

* *The Condition of England*, pp. 219, 220.

religious. History does not record a time when he first became a worshipping being. Modern investigation has failed to discover a people without religion. We are justified, therefore, in our contention that man is by nature religious.

It is true that some psychologists will not allow us to speak of man as possessing a religious instinct, but whether there is a particular instinct which can be called religious, or whether religion arises from the combination of other instinctive emotions, such as awe and wonder, there is no doubt that religion finds its root in the nature of man.*

With man constituted as he is, religion must arise. It is therefore a matter of grave concern to see signs of the decay of religion, or at any rate to observe that multitudes to-day have no use for any organised form of religion, and we are bound to ask: Is this religious part of man's nature becoming atrophied, or is the message

* " The true explanation of the religious sentiment must be sought in a combination of instincts which originally are too simple to be called religious. Religion would thus have an instinctive basis without our having to postulate any religious instinct "—Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness*, p. 70.

and the worship of the Church unsuited to the needs of modern man ?

We must consider both the nature of man as a religious being and his environment in seeking a cause for this decline.

Life has been defined as correspondence to environment, and although the definition does not tell us much about life, it does tell us what is essential to its maintenance. The living creature must be able to adapt itself to its surroundings. If any change takes place in the environment, whether it be in climate or in food, to which the creature is unable to adapt itself, it must die; or if, the environment remaining the same, a change through disease or accident or old age comes over the creature itself, so that it is no longer able to take from its environment that which is essential to its life, then likewise death is inevitable.

It is also true of particular powers of which creatures are possessed that if they fail to use them they lose them; the existence of rudimentary organs or limbs proves this.

The oft-quoted words of Charles Darwin in his autobiography illustrate how this happens with the higher powers of man. Up to the age

of thirty Darwin delighted in music, poetry, and painting, but later he wrote: "I cannot endure to read a line of poetry; I have tried lately to read Shakespeare and found it so intolerably dull that it nauseated me. I have almost lost my taste for pictures or music. . . . My mind seems to have become a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of large collections of facts, but why this should have caused the atrophy of that part of the brain alone on which the higher tastes depend, I cannot conceive. . . . If I had to live my life again, I would have made a rule to read some poetry and listen to some music at least once a week: for perhaps the parts of my brain now atrophied would thus have been kept active through use."*

Darwin seems to have recognised that as he became more of a machine he became less a man. Is it not so with multitudes today? They have become mere cogs in a wheel; that wheel may be large or small, circumstances or choice may be largely responsible, but the result in every case is the same—less a man, more of a machine.

* *Autobiography*, i. 101, 102.

If I had to live my life again! Life has to be lived again, though not here nor under similar circumstances; but it will have to be lived with the powers and tastes which remain to us; and as Darwin continued to live a maimed and crippled life, a life in which there was no correspondence possible to whole realms of human thought and activity, so will life to us be narrow and confined if we allow our higher faculties to decay.

The religious faculty in man can only live if it finds in its environment that which is essential to its life, and responds to it. That essential environment is God, and worship is the necessary response.

There is no doubt that changes have taken place in man's environment which have tended to cut him off from God, and so have weakened his religious nature. The influence of nature upon man throughout the ages and in all lands has been profoundly religious. This might be proved by quotations from the oldest books in the world down to the poets of our own time. Modern civilisation has, however, tended to shut out entirely for great masses of the people this religious influence of nature.

In our great cities man is surrounded by the works of his own hands. If he sees anything to wonder at, it is his own inventions and achievements, nothing reminds him of God. Is it any wonder if, living such an unnatural life, his religious nature suffers even as does his physical health ?

It needs, we know, but a very slight change in the atmosphere to make it impossible for man to live; we have taken out of man's spiritual atmosphere the religious influence of nature; could we possibly imagine that it would have no effect upon his religious life ?

It is notorious that the poorer a neighbourhood becomes the less hold does organised religion seem to have upon its inhabitants: this is not due wholly to preoccupation in the struggle for existence, it is partly accounted for by the fact that there is nothing natural or beautiful in man's surroundings to turn his mind Godwards. In less crowded districts, where some glimpse of the sky above and of the open country beyond can be had, men's lives are nevertheless crowded to suffocation. Every day is filled with engagements. Men do not stay to ask whither all this movement is carrying

them, they cannot bear to be quiet and alone, and because it is generally in times of silence that God speaks, they hear Him not in the tempestuous disturbance of their lives.

There are yet others who are under the impression that science is banishing all mystery from the universe and leaving no room for awe, wonder, and admiration, those emotions which are so akin to religion. God appears to them to dwell in the unknown, and every advance of science seems to reduce the possible area of His activity.

Such people would do well to remember the words of Herbert Spencer: " Those who think that science is dissipating religious beliefs and sentiments seem unaware that whatever of mystery is taken from the old interpretation is added to the new. Higher faculty and deeper insight will raise rather than lower this religious sentiment. . . . Amid the mysteries which become the more mysterious the more they are thought about, there will ever remain the one absolute certainty, that man is ever in the presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed."*

* *Principles of Sociology*, pp. 171-175.

It is into an atmosphere, an environment of this kind that the child of to-day is very often born, and what chance of survival has the religious nature of the child in such bleak and desolate surroundings? It is in the early years of childhood that the religious faculty needs most careful development, and nothing can ever quite make up for the absence of religious influence in the home. There is in the child an innate tendency to imitation; unconsciously at first he imitates the actions of those around. And religion is a thing which is caught rather than taught in these early years.

Is there much risk of religious contagion in the modern home? The Englishman is never very demonstrative about his religion, and in the best of homes there is not a superfluity of religious acts, in many there is nothing at all.

Contrast with this the religious atmosphere which pervaded the home of the Jewish child. As soon as he could notice anything he would see the Sabbath meal prepared, the Sabbath lamp kindled, the portion of dough set apart from the household bread. He would observe how everyone who passed in or out of the door reverently touched the folded parchment on

which was inscribed the name of the Most High. The domestic rites in connection with the fasts and feasts would make an indelible impression on him; he would look forward to the time when at the age of twelve he could make the journey to Jerusalem to accept his responsibilities as a son of the Law. In short, he lived in a religious atmosphere.

The modern child in many instances can scarcely be said to live in a home. Those great blocks of buildings in which rich and poor alike live can scarcely be called homes. The man who did not mind going from his home with his family to church, will not be seen emerging from the common doorway of one of these buildings; he is much too shy for that, and he will take on the colour of his surroundings.

We should regard it as a criminal act to send a child in full possession of all its faculties to a school for defective children, and yet many children to-day are being treated as though they had no religious instinct or sense. Parents are often either unwilling or unable to discharge their duty towards their children in this respect, and in the choice of a school the religious influence is the last thing to be considered, if it

is thought of at all, and in the elementary schools denominational differences weaken the religious influence.

But what of those who are no longer children? Do we not often hear it said by those who are conscious of decline in their religious life, that God is not real to them, that He seems so far off? How can we make God and spiritual things the reality and power which they ought to be to us? God "is not far from every one of us: for in Him we live and move and have our being."*

More than this, God is always endeavouring to get into touch with us and elicit some response. Many people in their homes to-day are receiving wireless messages from different parts of the world. This is possible because there is a correspondence between the transmitting and the receiving apparatus. It has always been possible for God to communicate with man and man with God, because of their likeness, and one of the distinguishing marks of the Old Testament is the conviction of its writers that God spoke to them. Most of us I suppose, remember times in our lives when

* Acts xvii. 27, 28.

God seemed very near; but why should these experiences be so few and far between?

If we really believed what we so constantly hear repeated, that all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works proceed from God, and if every time such good desires come we reminded ourselves that God was speaking to us, would not the sense of God's nearness be increased and our religious faculty developed? Let us get rid of the idea that God only speaks to people whom we call Saints, or at very rare intervals to anyone else. Let us cease to look for evidence of God's presence in the strange and occasional happenings of life, and seek to recognise Him in the trivial round and the common task. Let us remind ourselves that, far from having to seek after a God who hides Himself, it is God who is seeking us;* that it is not we who have to knock and beg Him to open to us, it is He who stands at the door and knocks.†

The atmosphere is full of music and of messages which are being broadcast, and not infrequently there is an S.O.S. God is always trying to communicate with us, and ever and

* St. John iv. 23. † Rev. iii. 20.

anon the appeal is heard—will the prodigal son come home at once, for his Father is waiting to receive him ?

It is a true picture that is given to us in Francis Thomson's *Hound of Heaven.* God is man's eternal lover, ever pursuing him, in joy and sorrow, in pleasure and in pain, seeking some response to His own great love.

" If I had to live my life again," said Charles Darwin, " I would have made a rule to read some poetry and listen to some music at least once a week." Can we not in the interests of the highest part of our nature, in addition to these constant attempts to realise the presence of God, at least once a week make an effort to develop our religious instinct ?

The Church exists to stimulate by its worship and teaching the religious nature. There is no doubt that our services need some revision, but let us not make this an excuse for non-attendance. The countries in which church attendance is highest have services which stand in greater need of revision than do our own. The religious nature of man, when strongly developed, can find stimulation and satisfaction in something quite simple, and can make allow-

ance for that which is imperfect, but the most perfect service will leave unmoved the person whose religious nature has remained undeveloped. It is reality that we need more than anything else in our services.

" There is," says Professor Pratt, " a kind of worship that is perfectly objective and sincere and that is quite as possible for the intelligent man of to-day as it was for the ancient—namely, that union of awe and gratitude which is reverence, combined perhaps with consecration and a suggestion of communion, which most thoughtful men must feel in the presence of the Cosmic forces and in reflecting upon them. . . . In this act of instinctive self-abasement there is no aim of producing an effect upon oneself; the attitude is as objective as it is natural. Worship is therefore not something to be outgrown. Its forms change with the changing symbols, the changing robes with which men seek to deck out the Determiner of Destiny. The thing itself is as eternal as is man's finitude."*

* Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness*, pp. 308, 309.

CHAPTER II

SOCIETY AND THE INDIVIDUAL

If we are to take any steps which will ultimately lead to that revival of religion which we all desire, we must understand something of the origin, nature, and development of religion: otherwise we may even be taking steps which will tend to destroy it.

It is necessary also to remind ourselves that what is religious is not necessarily Christian, and may even be in conflict with the spirit and principles of Christianity. Until comparatively recently the attempt was made to discover the probable origin of religion by analysing the religious sentiments, beliefs, and practices of the individual. He was pictured as standing alone in a world to which he was a stranger, and by a process of reasoning, influenced by the effect produced by nature upon him, coming to the conclusion that there was some power above him, and endeavouring to get into touch with that power. Now the pendulum has

swung to the other extreme, the individual is almost entirely forgotten, and the origin of religion is found in social custom, with which it is by some writers identified.

It is true that the average individual counts for very little in primitive societies, the customs of the tribe are all-powerful and no departure from them is permitted. It is also true, however, that religion and religions owe their continued vitality to individuals whether as founders or reformers, and that but for the new life infused by them into the religion and into other religious people, and by giving life and meaning to ancient ceremonies, they would have perished.

It is also true that with advance in civilisation and culture man tends to depend less and less in these matters upon custom and authority, and more and more uses his reason, so that the appeal to authority unless adequately supported by reason falls on deaf ears.

Without, therefore, further enlarging upon this subject, it seems evident that we must look to the individual to initiate those reforms which from time to time are necessary, and to give the impetus and inspiration required to

preserve the society from stagnation and decay. We must also look to the society to conserve all that is valuable, lest in the course of reform and development good and useful elements should be cast away.

The tendency to go from one extreme to another is seen in different branches of the Christian Church. The Roman Catholic Church tends to stamp out individuality. The individual is not encouraged to think for himself—if he does, he is in danger of excommunication; if he is a writer, his books may be placed on the Index. As an enquirer he may think for himself, but the moment he has decided to join that Church he renounces the right to enquire for himself, he accepts the teaching and decisions of the Infallible Church.

It is the feeling that the clergy of other Churches also have renounced the right to unfettered enquiry, and are permitted only to think within certain defined limits, that on the one hand lessens the weight of their testimony, and on the other lays independent thought open to the charge of unorthodoxy.

The Reformation following the Renaissance tended, on the other hand, to make men who

realised the bonds in which they had been held intellectually, think too lightly of the claims of the Society of which they were members, and pay less attention to tradition and custom. The exercise of the duty of private judgment became a menace.

If the Renaissance and Reformation occupy in the life of the Church a position corresponding to the age of adolescence in the individual, the attempt to stamp out individuality and crush the demands of reason is bound to fail, and it is well that it should.

The individual, however, needs the background, the support of the Church; he may not think so during adolescence or in some moments of enthusiasm, but it is quite certain that he does. The child needs the environment of home, of school, of society in general, and nothing can compensate for the loss of the religious element, for the earliest impressions last longest and are the most powerful.

Hence there is need to stir up the religious instinct in the individual and also need to strengthen the hold of society over him, so that he may regard it as his duty to serve the Society to which he belongs both out of grati-

tude for what he owes to it and also with a view to strengthening its hold upon posterity. A nation of individualists would not long hold together, and a Church in which everyone did that which was right in his own eyes would soon come to an end.

Religious ceremonies owe their origin to the fact that man has both a social and a religious nature. The religious nature within him is stirred by the influence of nature around, and his social nature leads him to co-operate with others in worshipping the Supreme Being.

In the Old Testament there are a great number of ceremonies, religious and social, some of which come down from pre-Semitic times, or extra-Semitic influences. They were matters in which the whole people acted together; failure to observe the appointed ritual was regarded as disloyalty of the individual to the society. There had been a certain amount of slackness in the time of the monarchies and an adoption of outside customs, but it was not until the Captivity that the social and religious customs broke down, and then under Ezra and others a great and successful attempt was made to revive them: so that in

Our Lord's time, while there were different sects, there was a very general observance of religious ceremonies.

It was amongst a people, then, who as a nation observed these ceremonies that Our Lord came and Christianity was founded. Many customs were carried over into the Christian Church, and great searchings of heart took place when the necessity for the continuance of such a rite as circumcision was questioned. Baptism and Holy Communion at once took their place as rites to be observed by all Christians. Christianity, then, was seen in a Society which had its rules and its ceremonies.

In our own country, prior to the Reformation, we had a nation which was at one in its religious observances; they held unquestioned sway, and all men were, externally at any rate, religious. To-day things are different. Religious ceremonies are no longer regarded as a necessary expression of the social life of the people. It is easy to charge the Reformation with the break-up of national religion, but some such movement was bound to come, and the reason why it had to come was to be found as

much in the internal state of the Church as in any external influences.

To-day, then, we are faced with a nation which has passed from childhood and will no longer accept the traditions of its forefathers without question. Authority in religion to-day is composite: it includes the testimony of the Bible, of the Church, and of the spiritual apprehension of the individual. A certain type of mind hungers after an infallible authority, and, in days of doubt and questioning, any Church or group which claims either to be infallible or to have an external infallible guide is bound to gain a certain accession in numbers; on the other hand, there is also bound to be a serious leakage from such a Church or group, of those who have been disappointed in their experience of the claim to infallibility. This transfer of persons from one fold to another in the Christian Church does not add to the total number of Christian people, and in the face of the great menace of secularism the energies of the Church should be devoted to winning the outsider.

How many adults are being won to-day by any branch of the Christian Church from the ranks of unbelievers or indifferent persons?

It is easy to make capital out of the differences in thought and worship to be found within the borders of the Church of England. It would not be difficult to point out how the science of to-day differs from the science of yesterday, or even how scientists differ among themselves, but that does not lessen the hold of science over the minds of thinking people.

We walk by faith, not by sight; therefore infallibility is not our portion in this world.

God Himself does not—if we are to judge from nature—hesitate to make experiments or take risks.

What a risk He took in making man! What a risk Our Lord took when He left the future of the religion He founded to a handful of weak men! Let us not, then, keep to ourselves because we cannot find the perfect Society, the perfect Church. "Join up with somebody, find fellowship; whether it be in a Church or Society, or among a few like-minded friends. Draw together for mutual support, and face those imperatives of prayer and work which we have seen to be the condition of the fullest living-out of our existence. Fix and keep a reasonably balanced daily rule. Accept leader-

ship where you find it—give it, if you feel the impulse and the strength. Do not wait for some grand opportunity, and whilst you are waiting stiffen in the wrong shape. The great opportunity may not be for us, but for the generation whose path we now prepare: and we do our best towards such preparation, if we begin in a small and humble way the incorporation of our hopes and desires, as, for instance, Wesley and the Oxford Methodists did."*

* Evelyn Underhill, *The Life of the Spirit and the Life of To-day*, p. 221.

CHAPTER III

THE NECESSITY OF WORSHIP

MAN is by nature a social being, and as such is unable in isolation to reach the highest in any department of life. Society has something to give to and something to demand from each of its members, and progress depends upon this mutual exchange. The organised Society, whether it be the State or the Church, is essential to that continuity of existence by means of which the rich treasures of the past are preserved and handed on to future generations.

The Institution, of course, has its dangers, it tends to become mechanical and tyrannical, but it also preserves the balance between stability and novelty. Men are, moreover, largely influenced by suggestion, sympathy, and imitation, and it is only when they are associated in groups that these forces have full opportunity of exercising their influence.

But social psychology carries us further

than this. It is essential, says Professor McDougall, to a true organic group life "that there shall be continuity of existence, involving the development of a body of traditions, customs, and practices."* This means that for religion there must be a Church with a cultus or worship. "There must also be," he says, "a conscious common interest, belief, or idea" —that is, for the Church, a Creed.

If we think for a moment of the State, it is evident that there must be not only continuity of existence, but public occasions on which citizens are reminded of the antiquity and the majesty of the State, and feelings of loyalty towards it are elicited. This is accomplished very largely by customs and ceremonies which, though they have lost much of their meaning, are a visible link with the past. If the State is to hold its place in the affections of the people, it must be wisely kept in evidence. When we sing the National Anthem, we are giving expression to the feeling that under the present system, illogical though it may seem to be, we are enjoying the best that both a Monarchy and a Republic have to give. The point, however,

* W. McDougall, *The Group Mind*, chap. iii.

is that there must be public occasions on which feelings of loyalty to the Throne are called forth, if it is to retain its place in the affections of the people.

In like manner there must be occasions on which we unite in the public worship of Almighty God, if religion is to retain its hold upon the people. The constitution of the Church of England, like that of the State in England, may seem somewhat illogical, but its ordered liberty and its connection with the State have given it a firm place in the affections of the people.

The pressure of material things is very great and is constantly increasing, and every Christian should make a serious and sustained effort to associate himself with his fellow-Christians in public worship. History warns us that cessation from public worship means religious decay. When it was determined to suppress Christianity in the Roman Empire, it was at once seen that this would never be accomplished as long as Christians were allowed to meet together for worship, and so their meetings were forbidden. The Christians, however, also recognised that these meetings were essential to their existence,

and at the risk of their lives they continued to meet in the catacombs and in other secret places, and so Christianity survived.

It was not so with the old pagan religion. When Christianity had won its way in the Empire, thousands of citizens still adhered to the old religion, and continued to worship in the temples, until the Emperor Theodosius forbade this worship and closed the temples. Unlike the Christians, these people meekly obeyed the order of the Emperor, and as a consequence the old pagan religion very rapidly disappeared. The lesson should be taken to heart by all Christian people. Religion, it is true, is a matter between a man's soul and God; but it is more than this, it is life in a spiritual society, which by reason of its continuity has been able to hand down to us a religious environment, without which the religion of the individual could not exist.

The lesson, then, alike of social psychology and of history, would appear to be that if public worship should cease, Christianity would disappear. Public worship is not a luxury, it is a necessity, and everyone who desires this land to be Christian in the future should by

personal example and influence support the worship of the Church.

Let us pass now to the consideration of the value of public worship, especially thinking of it subjectively, of its value to ourselves.

In public worship each makes his contribution to what may be called the atmosphere of the place, and the result is that each receives much more than he gives: the atmosphere of the whole is available for each. Or, to use another illustration, we are like members of an orchestra: it is one thing to play our instrument alone, and if we do not do so we shall not be able to take our part properly in the orchestra; it is quite another thing, as a member of an orchestra, to take our part in producing an effect upon ourselves and upon others which alone we should be quite unable to produce.

So in public worship: the person who is unaccustomed to pray in private is not much help to his brethren in church; but when one who is in the habit of calling upon the Name of the Lord joins with others in meeting together in His House, the result is something which none of the individuals separately could experience.

In these days, in which nervous breakdowns are of such common occurrence, it is worth while reminding ourselves and others that these may not only be due to the ever-increasing pace at which life is lived, but that they might have been avoided if the day of rest had not been sacrificed.

The quieting, healing influence of religion is well recognised by mental specialists and psychologists. Dr. Hadfield writes: "Speaking as a student of psychotherapy, who, as such, has no concern with theology, I am convinced that the Christian religion is one of the most valuable and potent influences that we possess for producing that harmony and peace of mind and that confidence of soul which is needed to bring health and power to a large proportion of nervous patients. In some cases I have attempted to cure nervous patients with suggestions of quietness and confidence, but without success until I have linked these suggestions on to that faith in the power of God which is the substance of the Christian's confidence and hope. Then the patient has become strong."*

* See "The Psychology of Power," in the volume *The Spirit*, pp. 113, 114.

And the late Professor James wrote: "Of course, the sovereign cure for worry is religious faith."*

I venture to suggest that the weekly rest cure, coupled with the suggestions which a helpful service is capable of giving, is what many people need today. Strenuous games or speedy motoring are not going to give that recreation of body and mind which will make Monday a day to be looked forward to instead of dreaded.

Think very briefly of three parts of the service in the Church of England and of the help which each ought to bring to us.

First, let us think of the recitation of the Creed. There are times, of course, when we must consider the Creed clause by clause and seek to understand its meaning, but if our minds are thus exercised during its public recitation we shall miss the effect which such recitation ought to have upon us. At such a time the thought of personal trust rather than of intellectual conviction ought to be uppermost in our minds. Thus considered, what a wonderful influence the recitation of the Creed ought to exercise! Here in church are hundreds of people who have been engaged in all kinds of

* *Talks on Psychology and Life's Ideals*, p. 224.

work during the week, people who have felt the downward drag of the world and in their loneliness have been inclined to cry with Elijah: "I only am left, and they seek my life to take it away." On Sunday, in public worship, they are helped incalculably by hearing hundreds of others join with them in confessing their belief in God and in the reality of spiritual things.

The Church is on right lines psychologically in bidding us not merely listen to someone else reciting the Creed, but repeat it ourselves; personal affirmation increases its influence over us. Therefore, if you believe in God and in the reality of spiritual things, it will greatly help you and your fellow-worshippers if you say so aloud; and if you cannot quite honestly repeat it all, repeat what you can, for after all it is what we believe and not what we doubt that really counts.

Or think of the part which Praise occupies in our worship.

To the captious critic God appears to be thought of as an Eastern potentate who likes his subjects to say flattering things about him, and who may show his displeasure if he is not

thus gratified. But no one has any hesitation in admiring and praising the good, the true, and the beautiful; and God to us is not merely a name: God is to us the good, the true, and the beautiful personified.

Think then, for instance, of the effect which the singing of the *Te Deum* ought to have upon us. In the original Latin fourteen verses begin with direct address to God: showing us where the emphasis ought to be placed.

Thee as God we praise. Thee as Lord we acknowledge, etc. We are giving to the word God the full content of the Christian Revelation. We are setting before ourselves the highest in the moral, intellectual, and æsthetic spheres, and adoring Him in whom we find all these to perfection.

The effect of such a concentration of the mind ought to be that our very faces become radiant as was the face of Jesus Christ when He descended from the Mount of Transfiguration. It is what St. Paul is thinking of when he says: " We all with unveiled face reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory."*

* 2 Cor. iii. 18. R.V.

Or, again, if we think of the prayers and intercessions. Public worship is a safeguard against selfishness; it helps to lift us up above the consideration of things from a purely personal point of view, it reminds us that we are members of a family, and that the interests of the family are our interests, and our interests are the concern of the family.

One of our Collects teaches us that it is God who puts into our minds good desires. If we really believe this, it means that it is God who takes the initiative, and that far from having to win over an unwilling God to our point of view, it is God who, by the inspiration of His Spirit, has succeeded in getting us to look at things from His point of view.

Our desires are unfulfilled either because we do not pray or because our prayers are selfish.

"You miss what you want because you do not ask God for it; you do ask and you do not get it, because you ask with the wicked intention of spending it on your pleasures."*

Prayer in which the initiative and inspiration come from God is never unanswered.

On one occasion when Our Lord saw the

* St. Jas. iv. 2, 3. Moffatt's translation.

readiness of the people to receive Him, He said to His disciples: "The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He would send forth labourers into His harvest."*

The subject for prayer was suggested by Our Lord, and the result of the prayer was that the disciples were sent forth immediately to gather in the harvest. In asking them to pray, Our Lord was getting them to look at the situation from His point of view, and as soon as they did this they recognised that they were the people whom God wished to send forth.

When, therefore, we pray in the Litany, *e.g.*, "That it may please Thee to defend and provide for the fatherless children and widows, and all that are desolate and oppressed," let us remember that if we are really praying we are giving expression to a desire which God has put into our minds, and that He is looking to us to do this piece of work for Him.

Whether we are able to appreciate the value of Public Worship or not depends upon whether the religious instinct within us has been developed or has been allowed to become atro-

* St. Luke x. 2.

phied. We do not realise the constant and heavy levy which is being made upon us by our modern civilisation. Compared with the savage our powers of sight and hearing are much enfeebled, and if we had to live under the conditions in which he lives our chances of survival would be very small. We are squandering our capital.

One of the senses which is being most seriously affected is the religious sense; its enfeeblement does not cause us so much inconvenience as does impaired vision or defective hearing, but it is really much more serious. These other senses we share with the beasts; the religious sense is ours alone. If it is to survive we must take steps to cultivate it, and one of the means we must employ is the assembling of ourselves together for public worship. The kind of service which will appeal to us depends in part upon temperament and in part upon education. John Bright in his journal records that while staying with Mr. Gladstone he accompanied him to church. "Mr. Gladstone," he says, "was most earnest. . . . To me much of the service seemed only fitted for very ignorant people," yet both were Christian men sharing many beliefs in common.

In a short story entitled *The Country of the Blind* Mr. Wells tells us of an explorer who, falling from a great height, finds himself in a heap of snow, shaken but unhurt. It is impossible for him to reach the place from which he has fallen, and so he makes his way towards what appears to be a large city within a high natural wall. From a distance he makes signs to the inhabitants, and tries in vain in various ways to attract their attention. At length he manages, with great difficulty, to gain access to the city, and discovers that all the inhabitants are blind. As it seems impossible for him to get food anywhere else, or to escape from the city, he makes up his mind to settle down with them. He has great ideas as to what he will be able to do, as he is the only person who can see; but he finds that their other senses are so wonderfully developed that they are at no disadvantage as compared with himself. When he talks to them about seeing they do not know what he means, and think he is mad. He is at a further disadvantage because they work in what they call the cool of the day—that is, at night—and sleep in the day, and they cannot understand his clumsiness in the dark. Eventually,

seeing no means of escape, he wishes to marry, but they will not hear of one of their women marrying a madman who talks about being able to see.

They feel him carefully, and come to the conclusion that it is those restless eyeballs in his head which have affected his brain, and on one condition alone will they consent to his marrying: he must have his eyes taken out. For a long time he refuses, but at last gives way. However, when the appointed day arrives his whole nature revolts against the idea of thus being mutilated to become like them, and he flees, managing with great difficulty to escape from their country.

The temptation to become conformed to this world is very strong; a blindness overtakes us, not through any painful operation, but rather through failure to use the organ of spiritual perception. At least once a week, said Darwin, he would have made an effort so that his higher powers might not become atrophied. Shall we not make the resolution that at least once a week we shall join our brethren in public worship, lest the religious faculty in us should become atrophied ?

CHAPTER IV

THE OBJECT OF WORSHIP—GOD

THE conception of God is the determining factor in every religion. It determines not only the nature of the worship offered, but also the character of the worshipper. Inevitably we become like the object of our worship. It would be easy to illustrate this from the non-Christian religions, but it will be more practical if we remind ourselves that, although as Christians we recite the same Creed, yet the conception of God in our minds may be, and often is, very different. Nothing is more essential than that we should constantly examine our thoughts about God and make sure that the God whom we are worshipping is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ideas about God may be religious, but they are not necessarily therefore Christian; forms of worship, ceremonies, ritual, may be attractive or seem helpful to us, but that is not the standard by which they are to be judged. Old

and new alike must be in harmony with the principles and the spirit of Christianity.

Idolatry is a danger ever present, for the essence of idolatry consists not in bowing down to images of wood and stone, but in holding in the mind false views of God and worshipping God as thus conceived. There is always the danger of making God in our own image, and thinking of Him as though He were a great Englishman, an ardent partisan in religious controversy, or someone for us to make use of in time of need. Against such ideas of God the psalmist protests when he represents God as saying: "Thou thoughtest wickedly that I am even such a one as thyself, but I will reprove thee and set before thee the things that thou hast done."*

In His conversation with the Samaritan woman Our Lord dealt with this great subject of the conception of God in worship and enunciated two great truths which must be ever in our minds.

"Our fathers," said the woman of Samaria "worshipped in this mountain, and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men

* Ps. l. 21. Prayer-Book version.

ought to worship." Jesus saith unto her: "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. . . . But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him."*

What the fathers had done was not the last word to guide men as to what they ought to do in their own day and generation, and the matter about which they had argued so long and so bitterly was no longer a living issue. Is it not so with religious controversy generally?

It has been pointed out† that the questions many theologians are discussing to-day are not the questions that really matter.

"What is at stake to-day is the fundamental ethic of Christianity." And if the Christian standard of morality should be repudiated "not as being difficult in practice, but as being false and even injurious as an ideal," what will it matter whether reservation has been allowed or forbidden?

* St. John iv. 20, 21, 23.

† Streeter, *Reservation*, p. 15.

Truth is seldom if ever all on one side; in the controversy between the Jews and Samaritans there was error on both sides; each needed a new Revelation, both refused to receive it. The idea both of the Jew and of the Samaritan was that to offer to God the most acceptable worship it was necessary to go to a certain place —to Jerusalem or to Mount Gerizim. Such ideas are widely prevalent to-day. Sacred cities, rivers, trees, etc., abound, but for the Christian, though sacred memories may be associated with certain places by reason of historical events which have taken place there, or because of personal experiences, Christianity forbids us to think that God is localised there. God as Spirit is everywhere present, and present as God, that is in the fullness of His activity and power. The belief in God as Spirit is the belief in God in action. Jews and Samaritans and many others like them had been in the habit of thinking of mankind as searching for God if haply they might find Him. Our Lord puts another idea into their minds—God is the seeker. "The Father seeketh such to worship Him." God does not hide Himself from man so that at certain points and places only does the light

of His presence break forth—God everywhere as Spirit is in search of man.

Sometimes the place which by association and suggestiveness ought to be the place where men most easily come into the Divine presence is the place where they do not find Him. One of the most wonderful pen pictures in the Bible is that of Our Lord standing outside the Church at Laodicea and seeking admission.

Men imagine that they are worshipping Him; in reality they have excluded Him. He is outside their worship. It is not where we are, but what we are, that matters to God, and while we can never be sure of coming near to God, just because we go to a certain place, we can always be conscious of the presence of God wherever we are if we are in the right spirit.

God is not to be thought of as waiting here or there to receive worshippers; as Spirit He is active throughout the world and not least in man, always moving him to awe and wonder and worship.

The Samaritan woman was mistaken in thinking that God could not be present both at Jerusalem and at Gerizim, but she was also

mistaken in her conception of God. "Ye worship ye know not what."

God as Spirit must be thought of not only as everywhere present, but as a self-conscious, self-determining Being. God as Spirit is a Being who thinks and wills and loves. In thinking thus of God in terms of personality we are not limiting Him: we are expressing our thoughts in terms of the highest category known to us.

Study of the Old Testament makes it clear that there was progress in the conception of God. God's power of revelation is always limited by man's power of apprehension. When Moses was bidden to go with a message to the children of Israel, he realised that it would not be sufficient for him to say, "The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you." They would say, "What is His name?" And the answer was to be, "I will be what I will be,"* for this appears to be the meaning of the Hebrew, which indicates apparently that there would be progress in the knowledge and experience of God.

There was a time when Jehovah was regarded

* Exod. iii. 14.

as a local and limited deity, one among others; and the relapses of the Israelites into the worship of Baal and of other gods were due to their belief that these gods were all-powerful in certain districts and in special departments of life.

There is real danger of our holding local and limited views of God to-day. Is it not a fact that the God whom some of us worship is an infinitely smaller being than the God of the universe as modern science reveals Him? The man who knows something of the vastness of the universe has no use for a God who seems, according to some people, to be primarily interested in what he cannot but regard as things of secondary or even of trivial importance.

There are a great many uninstructed Christian people whose ideas about God have not grown, who know no more about Him to-day than they knew in the days of their childhood. Psychology teaches that it is impossible for us to maintain interest in an object which does not change or in which we do not see something new. Is it to be wondered at that interest in religion dies down in people to whom God means no more to-day than yesterday?

The mind of God is revealed in nature, in men, and in the Bible, and our worship must be consistent with the revelations given in each: the might and majesty of God revealed in nature, the personality and purpose of God reflected in man, and above all the supreme revelation of character in the person of Jesus Christ. How the thought of God as a Being who thinks should purify both our private prayers and our public worship. If our worship calls for no exercise of thought it cannot be acceptable to God, for He desires that we should love and worship Him with all our mind. The love of truth is a fundamental element in the love of God.

But God as Spirit is a Being who not only thinks, but also loves. God is love. Our Lord in His teaching was constantly correcting current views about God: especially with regard to the limitations placed upon His love.

Health and wealth were regarded as signs of God's good pleasure, and it was extremely difficult therefore for the people to understand that it was hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. If the man whom God loved and honoured could only with difficulty

enter the kingdom, who then could be saved? Disaster, sickness, and infirmity were evidence of God's displeasure. When the Tower of Siloam fell, they at once regarded it as a visitation of God upon people who were particularly wicked.* So also with the man born blind. "Who did sin," they ask, "this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"† "Neither did this man sin, nor his parents," Our Lord replied. This was not the way God acted. He was the perfect Father whose love embraced all. "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."‡ God was not a Being who discriminated in the administration of the laws of nature, but treated all alike.

The supreme instance of God's love is in the Cross, for, far from turning and punishing men, He Himself suffers that man may be redeemed.

Seeing, then, that God is love, it is not sufficient that our worship should be coldly correct: it must be the expression of love arising in us because of His great love. We are afraid of emotionalism in religion.

* St. Luke xiii. 4. † St. John ix. 2. ‡ St. Matt. v. 45.

This fear was largely responsible for the loss to the Church of England of the great Wesleyan Movement, and ardent souls are being lost to-day.

Religion will accomplish nothing in us or in the world unless there is some enthusiasm, some feeling, in it. Our emotions must, of course, be under control, but to-day in the lives of many Christian people there is not the least danger of emotional excess; no one is likely to catch fire from them. Yet they profess to believe that God's love is so amazing, so Divine, that it demands their soul, their life, their all!

God as Spirit, then, is a Being who loves, and who looks for genuine emotion in our worship; not the working up of our feelings in an artificial way, but the expression of the deep and genuine devotion of the child to the Father.

Once again, God as Spirit is a Being who wills—that is to say, whose loving thoughts are put into action.

The laws and forces of nature are the expression of the thought and will of God. Man is able in part to understand what the will of God is, and is able to co-operate with Him in the carrying out of His purposes.

" My Father worketh hitherto, and I work,"* said Our Lord, or, as it may be translated, My Father is working up to this very moment. This is the Christian conception of God—not as of one who made the world and left it to go on its way, but as of one who is actively at work in the world now.

We are told that the process of Evolution has been completed as far as man's body is concerned, that it will never be more perfect than it is, that the mind of man will never reach a higher perfection than it did among the ancient Greeks, and that now it is in the moral and spiritual realms that God is especially at work.

In the man Christ Jesus there has been given to us a revelation not only of what God is like, but of what God desires man to be like. As, then, we worship, we must work—working out our own salvation, remembering that it is " God which worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure."†

But God is to be thought of not only as Spirit, but as Father. More than a hundred times does the name occur in the Fourth Gospel. God in worship is to be approached

* St. John v. 17. † Phil. ii. 13.

as Father. "When ye pray, say Our Father." "The Father seeketh such to worship Him."

God is to be thought of, then, as Spirit everywhere present, everywhere accessible, and always to be approached as Father. In public worship great care needs to be taken both in the choice of words and in symbolical actions. Truth or untruth may be expressed in both. Ancient liturgies may be very beautiful, but we have to ask, Do they express ideas about God and spiritual things which no thoughtful person now holds? Do they put into our mouths words which we cannot use without hypocrisy? No father would for a moment allow his children to approach him with the excessive ritual of some Churches, it would express something quite other than Fatherhood and Sonship. Particularly must anything in word or gesture which suggests that we are attempting to propitiate God be omitted, for this belongs to primitive conceptions of God and not to the Christian Revelation.

"When Jesus called God Father, He meant us to believe that there did really exist in God, though of course in far higher degree, those qualities which mark human fatherhood at

its best. . . . God whom we worship is no unknown Being, of whose character we are ignorant; but One who has qualities like those in ourselves, One Who can be completely trusted, and counts each human creature as the child of His love. . . . Between a father and a son there should be no barriers. Heart should go out to heart in loving intercourse."*

* Storr, *The World-Wide Prayer*, pp. 17, 18.

CHAPTER V

SILENCE BEFORE GOD

"Be still then and know that I am God." (Ps. xlvi. 10). The Psalmist does not tell us the actual circumstances which inspired him to write this Psalm, but from its contents it is quite evident that he and his people were in a very desperate condition. We must picture to ourselves a time such as that when Sennacherib's army, after devastating the land and destroying the cities of Judah, had surrounded Jerusalem and demanded its instant surrender. Realising that their own resources were totally inadequate to meet the enemy, they were thrown back upon God and cried: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Then we imagine the terrible pestilence overtaking the Assyrian army in a single night, and fancy the Psalmist looking out from the city walls and crying: "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations He hath wrought in the earth. Be still then, and know that I am God."

It was not easy then for them to be still. It is not easy for us either. We live in a condition of feverish haste and unrest. The rush of modern life, the keenness of competition, national and international, the depression in trade, the ever-increasing complexity of life, the rise of quite new industries, and the decline or disappearance of old—all these things and many more contribute to bring about a condition of nervousness and of restlessness, which even when days or periods of rest come seems to have taken away from us the ability to make proper use of them.

This restlessness is not confined to those who are obliged to struggle in the swift stream of modern business life; the leisured people, the people of independent means, seem to have caught the fever, and many of them live in a whirl of amusements as exacting and as creative of nervous restlessness as the competition of business life. The result is that while we are serious in business and serious in the pursuit of pleasure, we have neither time nor inclination left to be serious about the welfare of our higher self. But because a thing is difficult of attainment, it must not therefore be put aside

as impossible. Be still. It is *so* difficult, difficult even to keep the *body* still, more difficult to drive from our minds the pernicious idea that unless we are *doing* something we are wasting time.

It is a very serious sign when people must needs fill up every hour of the day, and sometimes far into the night; because they dislike so much being by themselves, they find it dull and miserable, which means that really they are dull and miserable themselves and are largely dependent upon others for their happiness. The greater the stimulus necessary to excite the sense, the weaker is that sense; the greater the excitement necessary to produce pleasure, the weaker is the character of the person who needs it.

There is but one remedy, it is the rest cure. Be still. This stillness is essential. We see it in nature: the stillness of night, the rest of winter; and for our bodies it is also essential, for we spend about a third of our lives in the stillness of sleep.

There is a very close connection between stillness and knowledge. Nature does not reveal her secrets to the casual observer.

Darwin spent twenty years in quiet observation before he formulated his theory of evolution. The late Professor James in his *Talks to Teachers* condemns the feverish haste of the typical American, and says it is the quiet worker who does the efficient work.

When you see some magnificent piece of architecture, you go back in thought behind the workman who laid one stone upon another, behind the foreman who superintended, and you come to one who in the stillness of his studio created the building first in his own mind.

When you read a lovely poem, or are charmed with a picture, or when an oratorio moves you to tears, if you think, you see each man wrestling in silence. He was still, and he came to know.

What is more, we must be still if we are to appreciate what they wrought in silence.

But if this is true of the knowledge of the seen and temporal, how much more is it true of the knowledge of the eternal and invisible, of the knowledge of God.

Call to mind the great religious prophets and teachers, and see how in silence they came to know God. Think of Moses, spending forty years in quiet seclusion amid the granite

precipices and silent valleys of Horeb; here it was that he came to know God, here it was that he was being fitted for his great work.

Or think of Our Lord: thirty years spent in the quiet seclusion of the village of Nazareth in preparation for three years of active work. Call to mind also how constantly He withdrew that He might commune with His Father in secret.

Or, again, remember how St. Paul immediately after his conversion retired to Arabia, doubtless thinking out for himself those truths which he afterwards set forth with such power in his Epistles. It was from the stillness of his prison at Rome that several of those Epistles were written. From the silence of Bedford Gaol came the *Pilgrim's Progress*; from the quiet seclusion of the monastery of St. Agnes the *Imitation of Christ*.

These times of stillness are to the soul as the cool of evening when the parched earth is refreshed with the dew.

The knowledge of God can only come to us in quiet contemplation. Think of God's greatness. Think of it in respect of time. We say God is eternal, but the mere saying of the words leaves little, if any, impression behind.

But if we say to ourselves, Be still, and realise that God is eternal, and we go back step by step further and further into the dim and distant past to the time when Britons were barbarians, then we carry our thoughts across to the Continent and find Rome at the zenith of its power, and we penetrate still further into the darkness of the antiquity of Babylon and Egypt; and when history can carry us no further, science tells us of countless ages before men appeared on the earth—nay, it takes us back to the time when the earth was not, when perhaps it was part of the sun, and we think possibly of worlds before our world; and when the imagination staggers at the attempt to conceive of these things, remember you are but trying to gain a faint conception of the meaning of the word eternal. But if you would realise anything of the meaning of the Eternal you must carry your mind forwards as well as backwards until you are lost in the dim and distant future; and it is only when in stillness you try thus to think, that any impression is made upon you as to the meaning of God being the one who was, and is, and is to come, the Eternal. You cannot thus attempt to conceive of the

eternal without feeling that you have come into contact with something, with someone, so immeasurable that you are exalted by the very conception—the things of time fade away from you as from one falling into a trance.

Or try and think of God's greatness in respect of space—boundless space. "Whither shall I go then from Thy Spirit: or whither shall I go then from Thy Presence? If I climb up into heaven, Thou art there: if I go down to hell, Thou art there also. If I take the wings of the morning: and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there also shall Thy hand lead me. . . ." (Ps. cxxxix. 6-8.) Our world is but as a speck of dust in the universe, travelling onwards through space. We try vainly to imagine the 92,000,000 miles that separate us from the sun; we can form no conception of the distance of some of the heavenly bodies whose light has been shining for countless years, but has never yet reached us, though light travels at the rate of some 186,000 miles a second. So far are the stars from us that although our earth moves 180,000,000 miles in six months the stars seem in the same place. . . . Be still, and know that I am God.

Again the imagination reels, but an impression is left upon us of the majesty of God as we dwell upon the thought of His omnipresence. And if we turn to the contemplation of the character of God, the same thing is true. If the truth is to make any real impression upon us, we must be still; moreover the great object of our knowing God is that we may become like Him. We may have time-saving contrivances in business, we may do many things in a hurry, but know God or become like Him in a hurry we most certainly *can not*. Be still, and know.

There is another side to this truth; it will have a reflex influence upon us when in silence we come to know God. The knowledge of God will inevitably produce in us a calm, quiet confidence; it will give to our lives a permanence, an unchangeableness of character: the surface may be stirred, but the depths of our nature will remain calm like the depths of the ocean.

We all know of persons who seem to live in a perpetual calm, and to be in their presence helps to bring quietness to our troubled spirits; and if this be so with the influence of man, what shall be the influence of God!

Many of the astronomical discoveries of recent times have been made by means of photography. A prepared plate is laid in the base of the telescope, and the glass, turned towards the desired point in the heavens, is kept by clockwork in the right position, while the globe on which it rests is steadily revolving. By its own light the heavenly body records itself on this artificial retina, and things which the human eye cannot see are faithfully photographed.

In like manner we must give time for the image and likeness of God to imprint itself upon our lives. As St. Paul says, "We all with unveiled face reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord are transformed into the same image from glory to glory."* But this takes time, and can only be effected in silence. We must then find time to be alone with God. But even more helpful is corporate silence, and there are opportunities of which we should avail ourselves of meeting with others to speak together of the things of God and in silence to meditate upon them.

It is difficult to account for the power of

* 2 Cor. iii. 18. R. V.

corporate silence, but in some mysterious way our personalities seem to contribute to create an atmosphere in which the presence of Christ is very real.

It sometimes happens that in visiting a person you find yourself unable to do anything but say yes and no. Your friend never ceases speaking; you never get a chance of telling him what you think about anything, and when you rise to go he thanks you for the very interesting conversation you have had together—as a matter of fact, what he has enjoyed is having someone to listen to what he had to say. Possibly if he had been silent or had given you the opportunity to speak, he might have learnt something from you.

We have throughout our lives got into the habit of incessant activity, whether it be in speech or action, and if there is any pause we think it dull, the machinery has stopped, and the only thing is to set it going again as soon as possible.

In the use of liturgical forms of worship there is this danger. We go on, as it were, addressing God without pause, and if there is a moment's silence at once we think something

has gone wrong—we do not give God the chance of speaking to us.

It would be difficult in the ordinary services of the Church to have periods of silence; some would not understand or appreciate them, but the worshipper who appreciates the power of silence can make such opportunities for himself. He must, of course, beware of the wandering mind which turns so readily to the memories of past activities, or anticipates the duties or pleasures of the morrow. But it is legitimate, when the service at any point has lifted us up right into the presence of God, to allow ourselves in heart and mind to dwell there, even though for the time being we cease to follow the order of the service.

It appears to have been thus with the prophet Isaiah: the service was proceeding, and the outward and visible became the doorway through which the inward and invisible were seen, and he heard and saw what could not be heard by the ear nor seen by the eye.

It is at such moments that we feel we understand something of the meaning of Our Lord's

words: "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."

We have been still, and we have come to know.

CHAPTER VI

COMMUNION WITH GOD

ONE of the great needs of to-day is the translation of the truths of religion into a language which people understand. Those of us who are constantly using theological terms hardly recognise how extremely technical they are and how little meaning they have for the average person. Even such words as faith, righteousness, grace are supposed to have a different meaning when used in the discussion of religion.

If personality is the highest peak to which the universe has attained, then it must be through personality that God is able to give the highest revelation of Himself to man; and therefore, as man has progressed in the understanding of himself and is destined through the advance of psychology to understand yet more, it is a distinctly retrograde step if we try to understand or express the relationship between God and man in any terms lower than those of personality. It is as though we should refuse

to accept the teaching of Christianity as being higher than that of Judaism, when Our Lord points out how much further it carries us.* Moreover Our Lord Himself did not ignore the development of religious ideas which had taken place in the period between the Testaments, but spoke to the Jews in terms with which they had become familiar.†

Grace is one of the terms which to the majority of people is a technical word and has no point of contact with their everyday life and thought, and yet it is something with which they are all familiar and would recognise if expressed in terms of personality.

By grace we mean the influence of God as a person on ourselves as persons, exercised in a personal manner. One of the first things we observe about grace thus defined is that it is universal.

This is what St. Paul meant when speaking to the Athenians. He said, " God has not left Himself without witness."‡ It is the truth that is expressed in the collects which state

* St. Matt. v. 21, 27, 33.

† See Charles, *Between the Old and New Testaments.*

‡ Acts xiv. 17.

that from God all holy desires proceed, and that He puts into our minds good desires. It is the truth expressed in the words of a hymn:

> " And every virtue we possess,
> And every victory won,
> And every thought of holiness
> Are His alone."

As the atmosphere is full of messages which are being broadcast, so God everywhere and at all times has been trying to get into touch with men. And our view of the non-Christian systems of religion today is not that they are of the Devil, but that they represent in the best that is in them not only man's attempt to get into touch with God, but also God's endeavour, in spite of the ignorance and superstition of man, to establish contact with him.

Indeed, as Christians, we should go further and say that Christ is " the light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."*

Now most persons have had experience of the power of some strong personality exercised over them, whether it be of the mother in the home or of some other person in the days of adolescence or through reading a stirring

* St. John i. 9.

biography. What they are to-day in business or profession, or still more, morally and spiritually, is due largely to the influence of some person upon them—and the greatest person is the one who through personal influence and inspiration is able to lift the largest number to the highest level of living.

The supreme example of such a personal influence is that exercised by Jesus Christ over the Disciples during the time of His earthly life and over millions of Christian people since.

In the words of Lecky: "It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character, which through all the changes of eighteen centuries has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love; and has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments, and conditions; has been not only the highest pattern of virtue but the highest incentive to its practice; and has exercised so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers, and all the exhortations of moralists."*

* *History of Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne*, vol. ii., p. 8.

When Philip made the request "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us," he was voicing the agelong, world-wide prayer of humanity. If this world is a rational world, as science is bound to assume, then this never-ending search for God is a witness both to His existence and to the trustworthiness of that religious nature which seeks satisfaction in God. Man is able to trust his senses; when he uses them they do not mock him, and we cannot believe that man is able to trust the senses with which he comes into contact with material things, but that his higher powers are untrustworthy—if that were the case then the world would be irrational in its highest department.

Philip's desire was not for a visible representation of God; as a devout Jew that was something he knew to be impossible. What he seems to have desired was some demonstration to his senses of the power and presence of God mediated through Our Lord which would be utterly convincing as to Our Lord's absolute authority to represent the mind and will of God the Father.

It is not to be wondered at that Our Lord expressed disappointment at this request, for it

was an admission that the character, the words, and works of Jesus had so far failed to bring to Philip this absolute certainty about God. In His answer Our Lord indicated to Philip that he was seeking for certainty where it could never be found. Philip wished for some demonstration to his senses; the real proof could only be given to and appreciated by the inner man. There is nothing that people need more to-day than this absolute certainty about God as revealed in Jesus Christ.

It has been said that if we would find any parallel to the present unsettlement of men's minds we must go back to the time of the fall of Rome or to the period of the Reformation. How, then, can we attain to this certainty ?

There is a road to travel and a price to pay, and we must be willing to tread the way and pay the price if we would reach that certainty.

The mother of John Wesley was once asked if she would not for the benefit of others write an account of how she trained her children; she replied that she had devoted twenty of the best years of her life entirely to the training of her children, and she did not think that there

would be many who would be willing to make such a sacrifice.

There are many ways in which men are trying to make God real to themselves. Sometimes they try Eastern methods of self-hypnotism, or excursions into the realm of the subconscious. It is easy to make the world appear dim and mysterious by half-closing the eyes, but man will never come to the true knowledge of God by dimming some of the lights that are within him. With eyes wide open and with mind alert, he must stand with loins girt ready to take the way that leads to God.

It is in the answers given to the questions of three of the Disciples that we find the way to certainty about God clearly indicated.

Our Lord had been telling the Disciples about His approaching death, and added: "Whither I go, ye know, and the way ye know." Thomas saith unto Him, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?" Jesus saith unto him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me. If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also: and from henceforth ye know Him and have seen Him."

Philip saith unto Him, "Lord, shew us the Father and it sufficeth us." Jesus saith unto him, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?" . . . . Judas saith unto Him, not Iscariot, "Lord, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" Jesus answered and said unto him, "If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."*

Paraphrased, Our Lord's words to Philip seem to mean: Look at Me, call to mind what you have heard Me say and what you have seen Me do, and as there rises before your mind a distinct and definite personality, a character clearly depicted, I say to you, you have seen God the Father.

The way for us is the same, only we look at that life indirectly through the records of the Gospels. We must study these records with all the help available until that character once more lives before our eyes. To this touchstone

* St. John xiv.

we must bring all our conceptions of God; if they fail to find place in the character here revealed, they are not part of the Christian conception of God.

So much for the Christ of history, but Judas is concerned as to what is going to happen when Jesus leaves them. He has told them that He will come again to them and will manifest Himself to them. "But how is it," asks Judas, "that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us and not unto the world?" Here we stand in a similar position to that of the Disciples; the manifestation is for us the same as for them, and it is given in the same way.

"If a man love Me, he will keep My words, and My Father will love him; and we will come unto Him and make our abode with him."* Christianity is being in love with Christ.

Not even for the Disciples was it only a recollection of a beautiful life once lived, but it is for us, as for them, an abiding presence; this is the Christ of experience. "If a man love Me." Here is the condition. Love is an emotional attraction to another person from whom you desire a like response. Love is

* St. John xiv. 23

essentially personal and combines admiration and affection.

Remembering, then, that Christ is a living person to-day, you gaze upon the character revealed in the Gospels and love is the result. All efforts to make yourself love are wasted; either you love or you do not, but you cannot love one whom you do not know, and to know Christ is to love Him. What a difference love makes to life! How the whole outlook upon life becomes changed when you suddenly become aware that the little attentions which are being paid to you are the expression of love!

It is just this transforming element of love which is lacking in the religion of so many to-day; they need the expulsive and impulsive power of a new affection.

Professor Drummond in his little book *The Greatest Thing in the World* tells of a girl whose beautiful life was the admiration of all, and how the secret of her life was revealed when the locket which she wore around her neck inadvertently flew open and within were seen the words, "Whom having not seen we love." St. Paul tells us the secret of his life when he says, "He loved me and gave Himself for me."

Religion for us must be as personal as that, and then it will be as powerful.

But love leads inevitably to obedience. "If a man love Me, he will keep My word." There is no need to tell one who loves you not to do certain things because they cause you pain, or to do other things because they bring pleasure. Love will see to all that, for love is the fulfilling of the law. The law of love covers all.

The scientist stands open-eyed, open-minded as a suppliant before Nature crying, as it were, "Teach me." He recognises that Nature does not reveal her secrets to the casual observer, but only to him who will devote time and go to all lengths in obedience to her dictates. We, too, must in like spirit kneel before Him whom we love, that we may know and do His will.

Immediate contact with the person, as in the case of Our Lord and His Disciples, and of ourselves with any living person, is of course *par excellence* the way of personal influence, but there are other means by which such influence may be communicated, as by means of letters or gifts, or places, or things associated in the memory with the person, or, as some would say, by thought transference. In the case of

those who are no longer alive we are open to influence which may come through reading a biography or autobiography, or, again, through contact with persons who have known them, or places or things with which they have been associated. All these are ways or means through which the influence may be communicated; in different ways they link us on to the person and enable us to establish contact. For us as Christians the all-important thing is to establish contact, to find effective communion, with Christ.

There are various means by which this may be achieved. We call them means of grace.

Reading the Bible is a means of grace. In reading the Gospels, for instance, we come into touch with the person of Christ. We are attracted to Him, not merely as to an historical character, but believing Him to be the Living Christ, we come into spiritual contact with Him as Divine. Whenever in heart and mind we ascend to where Christ is we establish contact, we enjoy communion, with Him. Private prayer and public worship are also means of grace—that is, means of establishing and realising the personal influence of Our Lord upon us.

It is important to remember that the use of means of grace implies the exercise of the mind. The Christ of history must not be separated from the Christ of experience. We must never allow the imagination to run wild, but use it to illuminate the character and teaching of the historic Jesus. "If a man love Me, he will keep My words."

We cannot keep what we are not at pains to know and understand. For adoration and meditation clear mental conceptions are essential.

The Sacraments are outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace, and if we keep in mind the definition of grace as the influence of God as a person on other persons, in a personal way, we shall be saved from false views of sacramental grace.*

* "There is nothing automatic, nothing magical, nothing unethical intruded at this point. Sacramental grace does not involve any such incredible supposition as that God, in this province of His loving energy on our behalf, ceases to deal with us as persons and treats us as though we were things."—J. K. Mozley in *Essays Catholic and Critical*, p. 242.

"Grace is simply the result of contact of man's personality or spirit with God's."—C. W. Emmett in *The Spirit*, p. 164.

God is always and everywhere present, and to speak as though He were present at one time or place and not at another, or specially present at any time or place, is to make the mistake of those who only see God in the unusual or miraculous, and who find that area constantly being encroached upon by the advance of scientific knowledge.

Some may be inclined to ask: "Of what special value, then, are the Sacraments?" This is to ask, as did the Jews when they found that the Gentiles were to be admitted on equal terms into the Christian Church, "What advantage, then, hath the Jew?" To which St. Paul replied: "Much every way, chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God,"* which appears to mean that they had great advantages as far as opportunities were concerned. Even so is it with the Sacraments. God has not one kind of grace which He dispenses through the Sacraments, and another, less efficacious, which He gives in other ways. "Christ is always and everywhere accessible, and He is always the same. Therefore it is possible to make a spiritual com-

* Rom. iii. 1-3.

munion which is in every way as real as a sacramental communion. But it is far harder."*

This seems to me to be the true answer: God is mindful of our infirmities and offers us means of help.

It is possible for a person to be, as we say, more alive, vivacious, communicative, and so forth, at one time than at another, and so in a sense be spoken of as more powerfully present at one time than at another, but this implies human weakness and imperfection, and therefore it is quite impossible that we should speak of God and of His presence in this manner. He is present as God, and if we add any such word as "real" to describe the manner of His presence we must beware lest we attribute imperfection to the manner of His presence at other times.

Our Lord was present at Nazareth, as He had been at other places, but He "could do there no mighty work because of their unbelief," not because of any difference in the manner of His presence. St. Paul could say: "I was with you in weakness."† Not so Our Lord even in the days of His flesh, certainly not so to-day. To emphasise a special presence at

* Temple, *Christus Veritas*, p. 240. † 1 Cor. ii. 3.

one time is to emphasise a special absence at other times. "Christ liveth in me," was St. Paul's experience, and his prayer for his converts "that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith"; and this experience and prayer were possible because Christ had said: "We will come and make our abode with him."

We are assured of Our Lord's presence in the Holy Communion first of all because as God He is everywhere present and always desirous of entering into communion with His children; but also because He has promised His presence to the individual who loves and obeys Him; and thirdly because He has promised His presence in the congregation gathered in His Name.*

It is rather remarkable that, although there is the promise of His presence in the administration of the Sacrament of Baptism, "Go . . . baptising . . . and lo, I am with you always,"† there is none in connection with the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

"The Holy Communion is not offered to us in Scripture as the means of coming into the presence of Christ, but as the means of receiving

* St. Matt. xviii. 20. † St. Matt. xxviii. 19-20.

Christ into ourselves as the food of our spirits, of being made one with Him.

"The disciples at the Last Supper were already in the immediate presence of Christ; they were accustomed to be in His presence."*

It is possible for us to realise Our Lord's presence more at one time than at another, and if we do not realise that presence with great vividness and power at the Holy Communion, there must be something amiss. With great solemnity we repeat the words and actions of Our Lord on the night in which He was betrayed, and the power of suggestion which Our Lord consciously made use of does its work. Let no one speak of mere suggestion: it is to speak disparagingly of Our Lord's method.

"The doctrine of the Real Presence is the assertion that by means of the consecrated elements Christ is really and fully accessible to us and apprehensible by us. . . . Though He is not personally localised, He is accessible by means of what is local. . . . The accessibility is spiritual, not material or local, and Christ is only actually present to the soul of those who make right use of the means of access afforded.†"

* Armitage Robinson, *Giving and Receiving*, p. 26.

† Temple, *Christus Veritas*, pp. 240, 241-245.

When we speak of God as immanent in the world, we do not mean that He is in matter, but that He uses matter as an instrument and expresses Himself through it. It is the purpose, the meaning and thought of God that is immanent.

When we speak of Christ as present in the Holy Communion we do not mean that He is locally present in the bread and wine, but that He makes use of them for spiritual purposes. The presence is truly objective—that is to say, it is not a presence created by faith, though it is not apprehended apart from faith.

It is not only we who use the Sacrament as a means of approaching God; He also, through it, draws nigh to us.

We shall never all think exactly alike on this matter, but we must bring all our theories to be tested by the original institution; and if any theory of the manner of Our Lord's presence, or meaning given to His words, will not fit in harmoniously with the rite as instituted by Our Lord, then surely we must not attribute any imperfection to what took place in the Upper Room, but bring our theories and practice into line with His teaching and example.

CHAPTER VII

THE INSTITUTION OF THE HOLY COMMUNION

It was Our Lord's habit to give thanks and break bread at every meal; in so doing He was following the custom of the Jewish people. The giving of thanks or blessing was directed to God, and it was considered a sign of unfaithfulness to eat without first blessing God.

It was undoubtedly this benediction which was pronounced by Our Lord over the bread and the wine at the Last Supper. "It is, in any case, to be borne in mind," says Dr. Dalman, "that it is not the elements of food and drink that were blessed; these are not changed by the blessing into something new, to which the Divine now becomes somehow attached; the object of the benediction is God Himself, who is the Creator and Distributor of all good things. The relation between what is to be eaten or drunk and God consists in the fact that it comes from Him, and the significance of the blessing

is just this, that before starting to eat and drink, the person recognises this fact."*

The blessing pronounced by Our Lord—if He used the more solemn liturgical form—would be: "Blessed art Thou, Our Father in Heaven, who bringeth forth bread from the earth." There was something so characteristic about the manner in which Our Lord broke the bread, or in the words of benediction which He used, that after His Resurrection He was recognised in this way by those who had hitherto failed to identify Him.

The two Disciples who were not present at the Last Supper recognised Him when He broke bread, and when they related their experience to the eleven, their statement that He was known of them in the breaking of bread was evidently considered a valid method of identification. This seems also to confirm the opinion that it was not something new which Our Lord was doing at the Last Supper, but conforming to the Jewish custom, making it in some way peculiarly His own.

On the night in which He was betrayed, in circumstances solemn beyond expression, Our

* Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua*, pp. 134, 135.

Lord took bread, and blessing God, gave it to His Disciples. There are some who consider that it was actually the Passover meal, but on the whole the opinion seems to be that it was a meal anticipatory of the Passover. According to St. Luke, Our Lord had longed to partake of the Passover with His Disciples, but he seems to imply that as this was impossible they partook of something of the same nature. In any case the parallelism is very close.

When the head of the Jewish family took in his hands the unleavened bread it was customary for him to say, "Behold the bread of affliction," or "This is the bread of affliction which our fathers ate when they came out of the land of Egypt." It was understood that when they all partook of that bread they were expressing in a dramatic way their belief that God delivered their fathers from the land of Egypt, and that they were sharing in the benefits of that deliverance. Instead of the customary words Our Lord said: "This is My body, which is given for you; this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many." Here was a new covenant and a new deliverance. Our Lord was doing nothing new in blessing God for

His good gifts, and in breaking bread and distributing it—the Jews do this at every meal.*

That which was new was that, instead of the meal being a memorial of the Passover, it was to be a memorial of Himself. His followers were to think not only of the Heavenly Giver of the bread, but also of Him who gave His life for them.

Surely no one else would have dared to suggest that with the blessing of God for His gifts there should be the remembrance of His life laid down for them. "Do this in remembrance of Me." It was to be His memorial.

Actions speak louder than words, we say.

In this service the repetition of Our Lord's words and actions is a solemn bringing of Him to mind. "As often as we eat this bread and drink this cup we shew forth the Lord's death till He come;" or, to use St. Paul's words concerning his preaching to the Galatians, we may say in every Eucharist, "Jesus Christ is evidently set forth crucified among us."†

While, therefore, we praise, bless, and glorify the Father, we remember the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

* Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua*, p. 177. † Gal. iii. 1.

But to return to the institution, let us ask what was it that our Lord was doing to His Disciples; what was involved in their acceptance of the bread and wine in this new connection? The Disciples had persistently refused to believe that it was necessary that Our Lord should die a violent death; such a death would be an end to all their hopes.

Peter even dared to rebuke Our Lord when He foretold His death: "Be it far from Thee; this shall not happen unto Thee."* To which Our Lord replied, "Get thee behind me, Satan. . . ." Somehow the Disciples must be made to understand that His death would not be a disaster, but would bring about a great deliverance for them and for many.

In the most solemn and dramatic way, then, our Lord pledges them to the belief from which they had shrunk with horror. They must accept the truth that He was going to die, and this was what they did when they took the bread and wine with the significant words, "This is My body . . . this is My blood." They accepted with significant action the

* St. Matt. xvi. 22, 23.

necessity of His giving His body and blood on their behalf.

Our Lord might have asked, as He did when He washed their feet, "Know ye what I have done to you?"* Only in part did they know, but this they knew, that they were pledged to the acceptance of His death as a deliverance and not a disaster.

It was essential that they should all permit Him to wash their feet. "Except I wash thee, thou hast no part or lot with Me." So here, "Drink ye all of it": they must all express their belief in His sacrificial death for them and symbolically accept the benefits which that death would bring about.

The teaching in St. John vi. accords with this. Our Lord had proclaimed that He was the Bread of Life. But He wished to express the idea of sacrifice, and the metaphor of bread was insufficient for this purpose, and so He changes it. "The bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." But this metaphor, instead of

* St. John xiii. 12.

being helpful, proves to be a stumbling-block, and immediately Our Lord withdraws it. "It is the spirit that quickeneth. The flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." That is to say, "Man receives the life of which I am speaking not by receiving anything into his body—the flesh profiteth nothing—but by the reception of My words which convey spiritual truths." So that Our Lord Himself explains for us the meaning of eating His flesh and drinking His blood; it is the reception of His teaching, including the teaching concerning His death, and it was for the purpose of introducing this idea that Our Lord spoke of His flesh and His blood. Confirmation of this is found in comparing the words in St. John vi. 56, "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood dwelleth in Me, and I in him," with 1 John iii. 24: "He that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us by the Spirit which He hath given us."

As we to-day receive the bread and wine we are expressing outwardly and visibly our belief "that as Moses lifted up the serpent in the

wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." Nay, more, we are saying that we believe that Christ died for us.

> " I do believe, I will believe
> That Jesus died for me,
> That on the Cross He shed His blood
> From sin to set me free."

The death of Christ has always been a difficulty. To the Jews it was a stumbling-block and to the Greeks foolishness. To the modern mind an atoning death or a death necessary for the redemption of the world presents difficulties. " Let Christ come down from the Cross, and we will believe Him," was not only the cry of Our Lord's contemporaries: it is the demand of not a few to-day, they want Christianity without the Cross.

To the communicant the taking of the bread and wine is in remembrance that Christ died for us; it is a solemn assertion of our belief in the necessity of Our Lord's death. We are not pledged to accept any particular theory of the Atonement, but we are pledged to the faith that Christ's death was necessary for the redemption of the world. Experience teaches us that the Cross as a manifestation of the love

of God is unique in its power to produce conviction of sin and conversion of life.

But the reception of the bread and wine ought to mean even more than this to us. It should mean that we express our belief that sacrifice is the means by which the world is to be won back to God, and that we pledge ourselves to make that sacrifice. "Here we offer and present unto Thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice."

We hear much to-day about self-expression, self-culture, and the like, and they are necessary; but Christianity calls for self-sacrifice, all the more valuable and potent because it is the sacrifice of a developed and cultured personality. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit."* Here is a law which has no exception in either the natural or the spiritual worlds. In every Communion we profess our belief in the efficacy of this law; do we live up to our profession?

If we continue to think of the institution of the Holy Communion from the point of

* St John xii. 24.

view of the Disciples, enquiring first of all what it meant to them, we shall realise that when Our Lord said, "This is My body . . . this is My blood," He meant the body which was before them, the body which was to be crucified. Further, the body which was being given *for* them was the same as that which was given *to* them. As there is no doubt that it was the body of flesh and blood which was given *for* them, so it seems clear that it was the body of flesh and blood which was given *to* them. Now the literal interpretation of the words is impossible, first of all because Our Lord said so—"The flesh profiteth nothing, it is the spirit that quickeneth"—and also because, as Dr. Temple has said, "When Christ, in His natural body, said to the Disciples as He administered the Bread, 'This is My body,' He cannot have meant 'This is My risen, ascended, and glorified body,' nor certainly can He have meant that the bread was His physical organism, or that the cup contained the blood then circulating in His veins. . . . The Eucharistic Bread is . . . the vehicle, the effective symbol of His personality." And in answer to the objection that

this reduces everything to mere symbolism, he replies, "To symbolism, yes; the word 'mere' is question-begging and probably represents a misunderstanding. In the physical universe symbolism is the principle of existence."*

In simple language Dr. Temple explains: "When in faith you receive the Bread and the Wine you receive the Lord Jesus Christ into your soul as truly as those who opened their doors to Him in Palestine received Him into their homes."

The greater the emphasis laid upon the word "is," the more does it become impossible to understand Our Lord's words literally.

To those who would interpret the words as referring to Our Lord's glorified humanity, the literal interpretation is obviously impossible, for that body did not exist, and to be accurate Our Lord must have said, "After My ascension this will be My body." There is no sense in which there and then the bread could have been described as Our Lord's body other than a representative, symbolical, or mystical sense.

The Disciples understood the words "This is the bread of affliction" in this sense, and the

* Temple, *Christus Veritas*, pp. 249, 251.

parallelism of the Passover as good as told them that they must understand the words " This is My body " in a similar sense. As a matter of fact, the meaning of the word "is " must always be determined by the sense which the context demands.

What the words meant for the Disciples then, they mean for us to-day. Doubtless every succeeding Eucharist enabled them to understand and enter more fully into the meaning of the words; the Holy Spirit in guiding them into all truth would guide them into the truth about this Sacrament. We must reject any such suggestion as that the original institution was only a shadow Eucharist, and that in the night in which Our Lord was betrayed, although He said, " Take, eat, this is My body," as a matter of fact He gave them nothing, because nothing could be given until after Pentecost.* This theory is not likely to meet with much acceptance. Most people would regard the original institution and what took place then as the ideal to which the Church today should strive to attain.

" It seems to me impossible to conceive that

* N. P. Williams in *Essays Catholic and Critical*, p. 423.

Our Blessed Lord, when He consecrated and administered on the eve of the Passion, did not consecrate and administer as He wished His Church afterwards to do in commemoration of Himself. His acts were, in the very fullest conceivable sense of the words, complete and valid. The gifts which He gave were the gifts that He intended to be given for all time in His Church. The endowment of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost did not and could not change the gifts themselves given in the Eucharist, but it quickened and increased the power of Christian people to seek them and to receive them.*

But let us return to the thought of Our Lord's body given, and His blood shed, for the remission of sins. A study of the service of the Holy Communion shows that this aspect is prominent throughout and indeed dominates the whole; to give instances would mean quoting practically the entire service. The service is meant apparently to be primarily one in which forgiveness of sins is found and assurance realised.

Forgiveness of sins is, of course, granted to

* Bishop Chase, *The Guardian*, September 18, 1925.

all who truly repent; absolution is pronounced at Morning and Evening Prayer, but in the Eucharist a pledge and an assurance are given in the reception of the elements which are even more strengthening than the comfortable or strengthening words. We hold in our hands symbolically the body and blood of Our Lord given for us. It is as though Our Lord Himself present says to us, " Thy sins be forgiven thee." It is commonly said that a sense of sin is lacking to-day. No doubt that is in part true. It is, however, a fact that there is a greater sensitiveness in the matter of what may be called social sins. What is needed is that Christian people should deal more drastically with their own sins. Our Lord had much more to say about the sins of religious people of His day than about those of publicans and sinners. He denounced the selfishness, hypocrisy, and unbrotherliness of the professor of religion, the general unattractiveness of those who called themselves the children of God. If we accept His standard it will be impossible for us to think lightly of those sins which He so clearly condemned, and particularly so when we show forth the Lord's death.

Many of our difficulties in connection with the Sacraments are due to the attempt to fix definite moments at which grace is given and the particular moment of its efficacy—the moment of Consecration in the Communion Service, for instance. The service helps to guard against this. We confess our sins and absolution is pronounced before the central part of the service is reached, and if we are going to insist upon something happening at a particular moment, then we shall say that forgiveness has been granted before we have received the pledges of forgiveness in the bread and wine.

We do not know the moment at which the ten lepers were cleansed, we simply know that " as they went " they were cleansed. In one sense it was as they obeyed and went their way, or we might, on the other hand, say that it was not complete until the priest had declared them clean. Christ, their faith, and recognised authority all had a share, and it would be foolish to try to emphasise one as against another.

If we consider St. John, chapter vi., in connection with the Holy Communion, we find the emphasis there is laid upon the gift of life.

" I am the bread of life: the bread which I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." This does not contradict the previous statement that the life is laid down for the remission of sins; rather does it complete it. Life is forfeited through sin, and forgiveness is with a view to newness of life. We come, therefore, as communicants to receive life and to receive it more abundantly, and even as the consecrated elements are pledges of sin forgiven, so are they efficacious signs of life bestowed.

CHAPTER VIII

FELLOWSHIP IN THE HOLY COMMUNION

It was inevitable that there should be development from the primitive simplicity of breaking bread; increase in the number of communicants and the size of the buildings would alone necessitate it; but in the development we have lost things of real value and placed the emphasis in a different place.

At the institution the thought of worship can hardly be said to have been present, for the attitude of the Disciples was not one of worship; they were reclining at a meal, and afterwards it seems to have been their custom to go to the Temple for worship and to break bread at home.* We seem, as it were, to have transferred the breaking of bread to the Temple, that is to the Church, and in the process largely to have lost the fellowship which was such a distinctive mark of the early Eucharist.

The Holy Table has been taken out of the

* Acts ii. 46. R.V.

body of the church and placed behind a screen; it has been raised upon steps until it resembles much more a throne than a table. The simple fellowship of the breaking of bread has become the worship of the Monarch upon His Throne.

It is well, of course, that we should be impressed with the sense of the majesty of God, and some forms which Christianity has taken have lost this sense; but we should also remember that there is nothing that we can do in church which will impress men with the sense of the majesty of God in the same way or to the same extent as the heavens at night or the mountains by day. No handiwork of man can compare with the glory of the lilies of the field.

The sense of the majesty of God must be brought into our worship from the study of His works in nature. If it is legitimate to take this simple act of breaking bread and use it as the basis of a service, the object of which is to extol the majesty of God, it certainly is illegitimate to exclude from the service one of its primary objects. It is doubtful if, by emphasising this as Our Lord's own service as compared with others, we give to it the pre-

eminence we intend. Bishop Chase uttered a warning when he wrote:

"I would, then, first of all venture to ask whether the position of the Eucharist in the New Testament justifies the kind of position which some Christian people at the present time assign to it in Christian belief and in the life of the Christian Church. It is in the New Testament a blessed means of grace for the strengthening and refreshing of the souls for whom Christ died, but it is not the essence or the epitome of the Christian religion. History warns us that if we allow the position of the Eucharist to be exaggerated beyond what is justified by the New Testament we are preparing the way for a reaction in which it will be in danger of falling into contempt and neglect." The words of administration are alone exclusively dominical, and these words indicate Our Lord's desire to unite His Disciples in fellowship with Himself in the suffering He was about to undergo and in fellowship with each other.

This development has resulted in many instances in what are practically two services: the Early Celebration, which for many is

intensely individualistic and is at an hour when most people are not in the mood for fellowship, and when time presses; and the Choral Eucharist at a later hour, when only the infirm and aged are expected to communicate, who are thus cut off from the fellowship of the body of the faithful and rather unkindly reminded of their infirmities. Eating together was, and is, regarded as a pledge of friendship, and nothing more traitorous could be imagined than to conspire against one with whom we had eaten bread. The treachery of Judas was emphasised by giving him the sop; he received the token of friendship and acted as an enemy. When Our Lord, presiding at a meal, broke bread and distributed it, those who partook were pledging their loyalty to Himself and to each other.

It was so regarded in the early Church, and this aspect of the Holy Communion needs emphasis to-day. We pledge our loyalty to Christ. We may do this in many other ways, but there is none so solemn and significant as that service in which Our Lord offers us the tokens of friendship, the symbols of His dying love, and asks us the question He asked Peter of old, "Lovest thou Me?" Have we been loyal

to Our Lord, or have we, like Peter, been denying Him? or worse still, like Judas, betraying Him?

Have we tried to understand the mind of Christ and endeavoured to live up to it as our standard?

"Other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring."* Do we care, as He did and does, for these other sheep, the non-Christian peoples of the world? Do we think lightly and perhaps speak disrespectfully of Christians of other Churches and of their ways of worship? Let us hear Him saying to us, as to the Disciples who wished to discourage those who followed not with them, "Forbid them not."†

In this service we also pledge our loyalty to the Society, the Christian Church, especially to our fellow-communicants. We do not all think alike, nor did the Disciples. Like them, we are sometimes guilty of rivalry and even of enmity; but when, after one of those occasions on which there had been some difference between them, they assembled for the evening meal, they laid aside their differences and received from Christ the pledge of their loyalty

* St. John x. 16. † St. Mark ix. 39.

and friendship to Him and to each other. So we who are in love and charity with our neighbours are bidden to draw nigh and take the pledges of our friendship and loyalty to each other. "We, being many, are one bread, and one body."*

It is not easy in our large Communions to recognise this, and even where numbers are smaller we are often strangers to one another. It is comparatively easy to pledge our loyalty to an imaginary body of people; it is a much more practical and searching thing when we communicate with those we know, and then and there pledge ourselves to be loyal and loving to them as members of Christ's Body.

The Church of England requires that Members of Parochial Church Councils shall be communicants—that is to say, those who regularly pledge their loyalty to their Lord and to each other; others who are not communicants may be loyal and trustworthy comrades, but they do not make this profession openly to each other in the same way.

In practice people find fellowship either in social gatherings outside the Church, or in

* 1 Cor. x. 17.

connection with its various guilds and organisations, but the Holy Communion is not itself to them the supreme opportunity and means of realising fellowship.

It is not easy to suggest how this fellowship can be restored, but there is one great principle enunciated by Our Lord which, if it was received and acted upon in its implications, would very much enlarge our opportunities of enjoying Christian fellowship in the Holy Communion.

"The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." It is quite clear from the context what Christ meant. If certain rules governing the observance of the Sabbath were found to be inimical to man's welfare, then it was man who was first to be thought of, and the rule which inflicted hardship was to be relaxed. If this could be said of rules which were regarded as of Divine institution, it can certainly be said of Church rules and customs.

The Eucharist was instituted for man, and not man for the Eucharist, and if any custom or rule makes it difficult for man to derive the utmost of fellowship with God and man from this Sacrament, that custom or rule must be relaxed.

God as Spirit is always and everywhere present, and is not of necessity to be worshipped at any particular time, any more than at any particular place. Place and time should both be considered from the point of view of their helpfulness to man. The best time, as the best place, is the time at which the worshipper is at his best, both in body and mind, for the purpose of worship and communion, and this is not the same for all.

Let us not judge one another: to his own Master every man stands or falls.

I am sure, however, that we do not lay enough emphasis on the social aspect of Holy Communion.

"Each one tends to come for himself alone, to confess his own sins and to get help for his own life, and thinks little or nothing about the rest who are with him at the Service. We have largely forgotten the original idea of the Service as you find it, for instance, in St. Paul's Epistles. There it is set forth as a rite of fellowship to which all the Christians in any city or district came that they might realise their oneness in Christ, and feel the life of the body pulsing through them and be lifted right out of their

isolation or selfishness. There is but one Body, says St. Paul, the counterpart of the one Spirit. The Body is one, as the Bread is one.

"Each piece of bread is part of the loaf from which it was taken, and the life of the whole loaf enters into it. One Body and one Spirit: one Body and one Bread. The Sacraments, then, are based on the idea of fellowship."*

* Storr, *What it Means to be a Christian*, p. 58.

CHAPTER IX

THE EUCHARISTIC SACRIFICE

We may define a sacrifice as a gift or offering to God as a religious act. Such a gift or offering has no value unless it represents the thought, feeling, and will of the person who offers it. In the Eucharist several such offerings are made. The offering of the alms and of ourselves, and the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, would generally be admitted as such; but inasmuch as, historically, the word "oblation" does not refer in the Prayer Book to the bread and wine,* and the suggestion made in 1661 that the words "offer up and place" should be added from the Scottish Office was not adopted, it cannot be said that the Prayer Book explicitly provides for the oblation of the bread and wine; but there does not seem to be any more objection doctrinally to the offering of the unconsecrated elements as symbolic of God's gifts to us in nature, than

* Proctor and Frere, *A New History of the Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 481, 482.

there is to the offering of the alms as symbolic of the offering of our worldly goods. This offering is recognised by the earliest Christian writers and has a place in the ancient liturgies.

The crucial question is whether Christ is in any sense offered in the Eucharist. The Roman Catholic Church is quite clear in its teaching in the matter:

"A priest is one who offers sacrifice, and as is the sacrifice, so is the priest. Since, then, our sacrifice is the sacrifice of the Mass, our priest is one appointed and empowered to offer up that sacrifice, one therefore who has received from God the power, by means of the words of consecration, to cause the Body and Blood of Christ to become present under the appearances of bread and wine and to offer them up sacrificially. . . .

"He is a priest solely because he has the office and power of effecting the real objective presence on the altar of the true Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, and thereby offering Him up in sacrifice."*

Canon III., Session 22, Council of Trent, says:

* *Vindication of the Bull "Apostolicæ Curæ,"* pp. 26, 27.

"If any shall say that the sacrifice of the Mass is only one of praise and thanksgiving or a bare commemoration of the sacrifice which was made upon the Cross, but not propitiatory, or that it only profits him who receives it, and ought not to be offered for the living and the dead, for sins, pains, satisfactions, and other necessaries, let him be accursed."

It is the doctrine that the priest did offer Christ for the quick and dead which is so severely denounced in Article XXXI.

"Two things are quite clear," says the Bishop of Gloucester. "That the Eucharist was in the early days of the Church a Service of Communion, and that it was called a sacrifice; but it is equally certain that the word 'sacrifice' had not the very specialised meaning that it came to have in mediæval theology.

"It might be used for any religious rite; it could be used definitely of the offering of the sacrifice, which we preserve in our service, or of the sacrificial meal; it does not seem specifically to refer to the immolation of the victim; and no conception of the Eucharist then prevailed which made it take the place of the sacrifice on Calvary. It is equally certain that in

the Middle Ages, as in the modern Roman Catholic Church, the sacrificial aspect of the Mass has been developed at the expense of the Communion, and that a meaning has been given to the Service of the Mass which conflicts with the uniqueness of the sacrifice on Calvary and assigns to the service a mechanical efficacy which seems to have no relation to the original institution of the Eucharist. There is no doubt, then, that the Reformers did desire to make a change, that they did desire to restore the Communion, that they did intend to go back to the customs of the Early Church and ideas more in accordance with Scripture. All this seems to me to be certain."*

When we turn to the New Testament we do not find anywhere the Eucharistic Commemoration described as a presentation of Our Lord's sacrifice to God.

The Greek words translated " do this " do not bear a sacrificial meaning. The ordinary meaning of the word translated " do " in the New Testament, Septuagint, and Greek literature generally, is against it. The authority of the Greek fathers, who knew their own

* Headlam, *Church of England*, pp. 89-90.

language, is against it. The authority of the early liturgies is against it.* "On the whole, then," says Bishop Gore, "there is not sufficient evidence to entitle us to say that [the word] bears the sacrificial sense in the New Testament." The matter stands the same with the word translated "remembrance" in the command, "Do this in remembrance of Me."†

Another word for a memorial before God is used in the Septuagint. "St. Paul's words, 'As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death till He come,' refer rather to the witness borne by it to the world and the Church."‡

This is borne out by the ritual of the Passover. The sacrifice before God took place at the Temple altar. At the feast in the house there was the Haggadah, or showing forth, in answer to the question of the youngest son, "What mean ye by this service?" This is obviously the showing forth before man, and it appears to be this of which St. Paul is thinking when he says, "Ye proclaim the Lord's death till He come."

* Plummer, *S. Luke*, *International Critical Commentary* pp. 497, 498.

† Gore, *Body of Christ*, p. 318.

‡ Swete, *The Ascended Christ*, p. 47.

There is, moreover, nothing in the narrative of the institution to indicate that Our Lord's actions were intended to signify something done in the sight of God. All that we do is done before God, and the thought that this holy service takes place in His sight must add great solemnity to it; but there is nothing in the New Testament which suggests that it is something which is to be done with a view to being seen by God and accepted as an offering to Him.

It is sometimes said that the priest at the altar is doing what Our Lord is doing in heaven. The idea seems to be derived from the Epistle to the Hebrews, but the typology of the Epistle is against it.

Our Lord as High Priest has entered into the Holy of holies, where was no altar, and therefore we ought not to have in our minds any thought of Christ as prostrate before the Father: there is no act or attitude in heaven corresponding to the suggested act or attitude of the priest on earth.

Our Lord is on the throne, seated because His work is finished, His offering made once for all accepted. His life is His prayer. His

presence is all-sufficient. "Heaven," says Dr. Swete, "is not a place of sacrifice, and our Lord is no longer a sacrificing priest: He has offered one sacrifice for sins for ever.

"But His presence in the holiest is a perpetual and effective presentation before God of the sacrifice once offered, which is no less needful for our acceptance than the actual death upon the Cross. He has indeed somewhat to offer in His heavenly priesthood, for He offers Himself as representing to God man reconciled and as claiming for man the right of access to the Divine presence. He Himself, as He sits on the Throne, in the perfected and glorified manhood which has been obedient unto death, is the living propitiation for our sins and the standing guarantee of acceptance to all that draw near unto God through Him."*

And again: "The intercession of the Ascended Christ is not a prayer, but a life. The New Testament does not represent Him as an *orante*, standing ever before the Father with outstretched arms like the figures in the mosaics in the catacombs, and with strong crying and tears pleading our cause in the

* Swete, *The Ascended Christ*, p. 43.

presence of a reluctant God; but as a throned priest-king, asking what He will from a Father who always hears and grants His request—Our Lord's life in heaven is His prayer."*

Theories which maintain that Christ is offered in the Eucharist are in danger of being understood to imply the insufficiency or imperfection of the offering on Calvary.

Cranmer's words convey a needed warning: "At His Last Supper, although Christ made unto His Father sacrifices of lauds and thanksgiving, . . . yet made He there no sacrifice propitiatory; for then either the sacrifice upon the Cross had been void, or the sacrifice at the Supper imperfect and insufficient."†

It has been suggested that there are three parts in a sacrifice,‡ but if the Eucharist is one of the necessary parts of Our Lord's sacrifice, and the benefits of His death are not secured apart from it, then Our Lord's death was not in itself a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, for without the ministry of the priest it is not efficacious.

* Swete, *The Ascended Christ*, p. 95.

† Cranmer, *The Lord's Supper*, p. 359.

‡ Will Spens, *The Christian Sacraments* (*Theology* Reprints).

According to Scripture Our Lord's death as a sacrifice is complete in every sense, and nothing is necessary but that man should know of it and accept it.

What, then, do we mean when we speak of the Eucharistic Sacrifice? The answer may perhaps best be given in words which will carry weight by reason of the authority and representative character of those whose opinions they represent.

The Archbishops in their answer to the Apostolic Letter of Pope Leo XIII. wrote: "We truly teach the doctrine of Eucharistic Sacrifice. . . . For first we offer the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; then next we plead and represent before the Father the sacrifice of the Cross, and by it we confidently entreat remission of sins and all other benefits of the Lord's Passion for all the whole Church; and, lastly, we offer the sacrifice of ourselves to the Creator of all things which we have already signified by the oblations of His creatures.

"This whole action, in which the people has necessarily to take its part with the priest, we are accustomed to call the Eucharistic Sacrifice."

At the Fulham Round Table Conference, held in 1900, at which among others present were Bishop Gore, Bishop Moule, Dean Wace, and Lord Halifax, the following statement was agreed upon: "As one aspect of the ordinance there may be truly said to be a submitting to the Divine view of the sacrifice of the death of Christ in representation, as having made once for all the perfect propitiation for the sins of the world."

This view cannot be directly supported by any quotations from the New Testament, but it is not difficult to see that it was inevitable and legitimate that it should arise.

The original institution was no part of a service or act of worship, it was part of a meal associated with the Passover, which took place in the home, and celebrations of the Holy Communion in the early days of the Church took place in the homes of the people.*

In process of time the blessing pronounced over the bread and wine became the centre of a service which grew up around it, and therefore became part of an act of worship directed Godwards; it was therefore only natural that the

* Acts ii. 46.

Godward aspect of the action should become prominent.

This aspect of the Holy Communion helps to remind us that " the Sacraments are performed not by the Bishop or priest, but by the Church, and the minister of the Sacraments is Christ. The priest is but the minister of the Church through whom it acts."*

Instead, therefore, of the celebrant being regarded as doing something before the congregation, the whole congregation is thought of as doing something before God.

It is unfortunate that this aspect of the Eucharist has tended to become separated from the act of communion, for " to suppose our Lord's presence attached to the Bread apart from His giving and our receiving it as the food which is Himself . . . is to go beyond any warrant that is found in His words, or, as far as I can judge, in the ancient canon of the Western Church, or in the Communion Office of our Prayer Book to-day."†

" I am convinced," says Bishop Gore, " that we cannot habitually separate the offering of

* Headlam, *The Church of England*, p. 67.

† Armitage Robinson, *Giving and Receiving*, p. 78.

the sacrifice from the act of communion without grave loss. I cannot help looking longingly, and not without hope, for a state of things when the chief service of the Sunday shall be at an hour when all can communicate who are qualified and prepared."*

The Passover was a memorial feast following upon a sacrifice, and participation in the feast was an essential part. The Holy Communion is a memorial feast following upon the sacrifice once made on Calvary.

We know that God has accepted this full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. We plead it as the ground of our trust in God's forgiving love, and we signify our acceptance of it in the act of communion, for it is "as oft as we eat this bread, and drink this cup, that we show forth the Lord's death till He come."

Then, as those who have been forgiven, we offer ourselves, our souls and bodies to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto God.

In this great drama or Passion play each has a part to play. We are more than spectators,

* *The Religion of the Church*, p. 59.

and we take our part outwardly and visibly in the act of communion.

Having received the holy mysteries, we are assured of our incorporation into the mystical body of Christ, the blessed company of all faithful people; and while thinking of all the company of heaven, there should be a sufficiently large number of communicants to make it unnecessary for us to rely largely upon the imagination to picture the Church militant here upon earth.

Finally, as those who have been forgiven, fed with the bread of life, enjoyed fellowship, and shown forth the Lord's death, we join in our final act of praise, in the *Gloria in excelsis*.

CHAPTER X

EPILOGUE

In the last few years we have witnessed a revulsion from the individualistic type of religion, so violent that it was regarded as almost culpable to be concerned with the problems of one's own spiritual life. The reply of the busy minister to the Quaker lady's question, "And, friend, when dost thou think of thine own soul?" "Madam, I had almost forgotten I had a soul," has been quoted with approval. In the presentation of Christianity, the appeal to safety and the appeal to service were contrasted, to the detriment of the former.

The result has been, I think, disappointing. People were invited to work for the kingdom who were themselves outside that kingdom, and consequently the kingdom to which they invited others, whatever else it may have been, was not the kingdom of God. Our Lord preached the kingdom, but with equal emphasis He preached that men needed to be born again

if they were to see it and enter it. He called men to repentance in view of it, but it is impossible for us to lead another to repentance unless we ourselves have had first-hand experience of it.

Happily, modern psychology has come to help to restore the balance, and once again to emphasise the importance of the religious life of the individual.

We have the highest authority for saying that it is possible to cast out devils and in Christ's name do many wonderful works, and at the end to be refused recognition as Christian workers—" I never knew you."

There must first be the personal relationship out of which these activities issue.

The judgments we form, the services we render, will depend upon what we are. Man must be open and receptive on the Godward side, if he is to be transmissive of anything of value to the kingdom on the manward side.

Christianity stands for the belief that spiritual values are absolute, and if this is the case they can never be a mere appendix to social activities.

" It is more than arguable," says Bishop Talbot of Pretoria, " that the most potent

instruments for social amelioration in history have not been those who have consciously and solemnly bustled about to set everybody and everything right. Rather it has been those who have brought to bear on the world around them the irresistible infection of a humanity singly and entirely given to God."*

Our Lord is here as in all matters our great exemplar, and His method is expressed in the words, " For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth."†

May what has been written assist in the search for Truth and lead to sanctification of life, so that we may be among those who worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

* *The Returning Tide of Faith*, p. 198.

† St. John xvii. 19.

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